

Healing, Hockey, and the Holidays

Holiday traditions and family get-togethers are a source of comfort for many. But the holidays can also act as anniversaries of unpleasant events or remind us of difficult changes that have happened in the last year. Veterans may also have memories of being deployed over a holiday during their service and could experience challenges with returning to civilian norms. For Veterans diagnosed with PTSD, the holidays can be difficult to manage.

U.S. Marine Corps Veteran Clark Webb wants other Veterans to know during the holiday season (and all year long): “It’s ok not to be ok.”

Clark adds, “Know that there are people out there who have gone through, or are going through similar things. If you’re having a hard time, talk to someone, anyone. And if it’s a fellow Veteran, that’s even better.”

The Butler VA is here for our Veterans during the often difficult and stressful holiday season. Reach out to your health care team and learn how we can help. Clark reached out to the Butler VA after hearing positive reviews from a fellow Veteran, and since then has received numerous services, ranging from primary care to mental health care.

“My experience with the Butler VA has been great. Everyone I’ve seen and interacted with has been so nice, helpful, and knowledgeable,” shared Clark.

Besides using the VA, Clark focuses on his health through hockey. Clark joined the Pittsburgh Warriors in

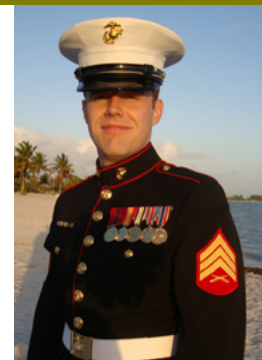
the spring of this year and plays offense. (Although he is still learning!) He heard about and got started with the team through the Wounded Warrior Project.

Pittsburgh Warriors Hockey is a 501(c)(3) organization of honorably discharged service members with a service-connected disability united around hockey and dedicated to providing a cathartic experience, promote physical and mental healing and growth, as well as enable team members to be even more productive members of society.

“With the Warriors, I like the camaraderie. It’s so nice to be a part of a team again. I appreciate being able to talk to and play with a group of people who share a similar background and experiences,” said Clark. “I absolutely recommend other Veterans try a Veterans sports team. It will get you out, connect you with other Veterans, and give you a workout all at the same time.”

Veterans can learn more about the Pittsburgh Warriors on their Facebook page: www.facebook.com/pittsburghwarriors. Any skill level is encouraged to play!

Whether it’s hockey, help from the VA, or both, just know support is available this holiday season and all year long. Call or visit us today - www.va.gov/butler-health-care/.



“It’s ok not to be ok. But, know that there are people out there who have gone through, or are going through similar things. If you’re having a hard time, talk to someone, anyone.” - Clark Webb, U.S. Marine Corps Veteran



Manage Holiday Stress

Stress comes in many forms and can have a negative effect on health if it continues too long or feels overwhelming. The Butler VA has tools available to help you manage and reduce your stress during the holiday season, and all year long.

Enroll today! www.choose.va.gov.

Veterans Crisis Line

Mental Health problems do not take a holiday and neither do we!

If you or someone you know is in emotional crisis, you can call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). You also can text 838255 or chat online at: www.veteranscrisisline.net.



GET CREATIVE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!

There are a variety of health benefits associated with creative arts, some of which include:

- Less stress
- Improved coping with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and symptoms of traumatic brain injury
- Increased self-esteem, confidence, and self-awareness
- Better physical and mental health
- Relief of depression and anxiety

The Butler VA Health Care System partnered with Steeler's Brushes & Ceramics to provide Veterans:

- 10% off discount at the studio (always)
- Veteran Art Club (First Monday of each month from 11:30am – 1:30pm)
- Women Veteran Art Club (Third Monday of each month from 11:30am – 1:30pm)

Veterans receive \$5 off items over \$30. Bring snacks; meet fellow Veterans; get creative! Call 724-679-0488 for more information.

NEW WHOLE HEALTH COURSE

Starting this month, the Butler VA's Whole Health program offers a new 4-week course called "Resilience and Mindful Wellbeing." It meets, bimonthly on Mondays at 1pm at the Abie Abraham VA Clinic.

Cultivating resilience through mindful wellbeing allows Veterans to explore different practices, habits, thoughts, and behaviors to cope with daily life, lessen stress, and increase feelings of connection. For more information, please contact: Megan Tritt MSW, LCSW, Whole Health Program Manager: 878-271-6744, or Meridith Paterson, RD, Whole Health Coordinator: 878-271-6718.

Learn more about Whole Health: www.va.gov/wholehealth

WHY GET THE COVID-19 BOOSTER SHOT?

COVERID-19 vaccines work well to prevent severe illness and death and work against the Delta variant, which spreads easier and may cause more severe illness than earlier COVID forms. For this reason, booster shots are advised for some people in order for them to stay fully protected over time.

Data shows protection against milder illness lowers with time. This is especially true for certain groups of people. A booster is for people whose immune response may have weakened.

The best way to protect yourself and those you care about is to get the vaccine. Here's a resource to share with all who may still have questions: www.va.gov/initiatives/have-questions-before-you-get-your-covid-19-vaccine.

The Butler VA offers Veterans the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine booster shots. A walk-in clinic is available from 9am-2pm, Monday-Friday at the Butler VA's New Castle Road Campus, 325 New Castle Road. For more information, call 1-888-266-9040.

ENJOY HOLIDAY MEALS WITH DIABETES

With the hustle and bustle of holiday shopping, family get-togethers and social events, the holidays can be stressful, especially for people with diabetes. So often, these events are centered around food. It's important for people with diabetes to know that they can enjoy their traditional holiday foods while keeping their blood sugar levels in check.

Mindful eating is a strategy that helps you to be present with your food and increase enjoyment at meals. There are several principles to mindful eating: <https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/97117/enjoying-holiday-meals-the-mindful-way/>.

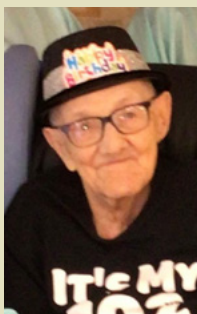
Did you know? The Butler VA offers a Diabetes Education Program that offers:

- 3-hour informative experience
- Follow-up coaching and support from a registered nurse (RN)
- A lifetime of health

Enroll for free today by calling 878-271-6922.

SALUTE YOU

Thank you for your service BILL IFFT, U.S. Army



U.S. Army and WWII Veteran Bill Ifft served as a medic, 49th General Hospital. He also recently celebrated his 102nd birthday in the Butler VA's Community Living Center. Happy Birthday Bill!

Let us "Salute You!" Contact the Butler VA Public Affairs Office for more information.



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